

National Canners Association

WASHINGTON, D. C.

Information
Letter



For N. C. A.
Members

Membership Letter No. 13.

May 5, 1923.

He Learned It By Heart--Almost.

From time to time we have called attention to persons claiming damages from illness alleged to be due to canned foods. No doubt there are instances where witnesses are coached to the point of perfection, but sometimes even the adroit ambulance chaser fails to coach a witness on every possible point.

Following is a report of a case tried in one of our large cities this week. The letter comes direct from the canner in question, and reads, in part, as follows:

"One of our customers was made defendant recently in a suit brought by a woman who over three years ago sent her six-year old son to the customer's store to buy a can of ----. The can he bought was a can of ours. She testified that the boy brought it home, that she opened the can and ate two pieces of the contents, and became very sick instantly. She had in court as a witness her young son, who is now nine years of age. He testified beautifully; answered for both attorneys substantially the same questions and in the same way that his mother answered, and was making an excellent impression until the attorney for the defendant said to him: 'My boy, when this happened you were only six years old. Can you explain to the court how it happened that you remember so clearly exactly what you did and what you said on the 26th day of February, 1920?' His answer was: 'I ain't remembered nuthin'; I learn it by heart.'

"After the jury had stopped laughing sufficiently for the Judge to be heard, he took the case out of the jury's hands and rendered a case for the defendant on account of lack of evidence."

Impetus Given to Coding by Pacific Fisheries Association.

The endorsement of coding at the recent meeting of the Association of Pacific Fisheries at Seattle has marked a decided step forward in the canning industry. Other branches, notably the milk people, years ago adopted a system whereby various lots or batches of food can be identified and sorted out, if necessary. Likewise, certain individual concerns have been doing it for years. Favorable comment has been occasioned by the action of the Pacific Fisheries Association and the packers of other commodities may now reasonably be expected to follow suit. Certainly, many individual canners who have not heretofore been doing so will adopt coding which will enable them to identify individual lots even after they have reached the retailer's shelves.

It was suggested at the Seattle meeting that if possible each day's operations be divided into two parts, namely, forenoon and afternoon; better into four periods of two to three hours each, which could each be given a special code number. Thus the day's marking would show almost the hour the goods were packed.

This definite information would prove helpful to canners in making experimental runs, or if called upon to adjust complaints regarding canned foods put up by some other canner. Also, it would be of inestimable value in cases of alleged illness attributed to canned foods.

Altogether, coding appears to be a natural sequence in the effort being made by canners to better the quality of their foods through improved methods.

Canners' Convention Reservations Assured.

Reassurance is given that members of the Association will be taken care of in the way of hotel reservations at the forthcoming convention in Buffalo next January by the following plan.

Those desiring reservations are to write direct to the hotels in Buffalo. These are the Statler, Lafayette, Buffalo, Ford, Lenox, Touraine, Mar-keen, Graystone, Broezel, McLeod's, Arlington, and Cheltenham.

The hotels, in turn, will refer the request to the Location Committee, composed of James A. Anderson, president of the National Canners Association; Frank C. Engelhart, president of the Canning Machinery and Supplies Association; and Charles P. Whiteman, president of the National Food Brokers Association. The Committee will then pass upon the requests, and when rooms are assigned, applicants will be notified.

A number of canners have been writing to the Washington office, but they have been advised to communicate direct with the Buffalo hotels, for, through the new system, their reservations will automatically come to the attention of the president of the Association, as a member of the Location Committee. It is requested, however, that canners send to us at Washington carbons of the letters they send to the hotels. Incidentally a number are asking for space at the Hotel Iroquois. This was an old standby, but has now been converted into an office building.

Cornell to Cooperate in Study of Canners' Crops.

At the request of the Committee on Agricultural Relations of the Association of New York State Canners, Mr. Woodbury, of the Raw Products Bureau visited Rochester and Ithaca, New York, last week. At Rochester a conference was held with the Association secretary and the canners' committee. Plans were gone over relating to cooperation from the canning industry on raw products work which is being undertaken by Cornell this season.

A member of the University staff has been detailed to make a survey of production problems surrounding the growing of peas, corn, beans, and tomatoes. The canners will cooperate in every way possible to make this summer's survey a success. At the end of the season the information collected will be assembled, together with all additional data previously collected by the University, and a research program formulated for future work.

At Ithaca Mr. Woodbury conferred with the Dean of the College of Agriculture and several of the Heads of Departments on details of the proposed summer work.

Claims Spinach Made Her Beautiful.

A newspaper dispatch from New York reads, in part, as follows:

"If the Venus de Milo had munched canned spinach, instead of spaghetti, or whatever was her favorite dish, she might have been as beautiful as Martha Gonzales.

"Martha is America's 'perfect 34'. Her measurements are up-to-the-minute. She has sent the ancient Grecian lass back with Aspasia and Cleopatra, and other half-forgotten brunettes, and she says she owes it all to spinach, eaten since early childhood."

Load Cars to Full Carrying Capacity.

Canners are urged by the Car Service Division of the American Railway Association to see that freight cars are loaded to their full carrying capacity.

Evidence that the railroads are translating increased earnings into increased facilities as rapidly as car building programs can be carried out may be seen from the announcement that 44,302 freight cars have been put into service since the first of the year and 116,890 new ones ordered. Also, 1,077 locomotives have been put in service in that time and about 2,000 new ones ordered.

Successful Section Meetings at Baltimore.

In connection with the Tri-State meeting at the Southern Hotel, Baltimore, the Tomato Section held a meeting at 10 a.m. on May 4th, vice-president George E. Dismant presiding. This was a general meeting at which all tomato canners were invited to be present. The apparent falling off in consumer demand for canned tomatoes was viewed with considerable concern and the discussion developed many timely suggestions which, if put into operation, would no doubt not only check the weakening demand for this very wholesome product, but on the other hand would materially increase it. Improvements in canning factory practices, grading, labeling, and sales methods were among the leading suggestions.

Owing to the limited time available, the meeting of the Corn and Pea Sections was combined. Ex-president H.P. Strasbaugh presided in the absence of the chairman of each section. A continuation of the discussion held at Milwaukee at the recent meeting of these two sections developed strong sentiment for definitions and standards embracing four grades--Fancy, Extra-Standard, Standard, and Sub-Standard. Here again there was diversity of opinion as to the desirability of using the word "Choice" or "Extra-Standard" to define the second grade. The section meetings discussed at length the matter of allowance for swells, but no action was taken.

The interest shown in both the forenoon and afternoon meetings demonstrates the desire of the canners for more frequent meetings of the sections of the Association and no doubt as opportunity offers, meetings of some of the sections will be held in other localities.

Further Investigations of Illness Cases.

Since our last report, the Association has begun investigations of alleged cases of illness attributed to the following canned foods.

Shrimp
Corn
Tomatoes
"Canned foods"
Salmon
Sardines
Spinach

The case above referred to, involving a number of canned foods, was fully investigated by the local health authorities in cooperation with the United States Public Health Service and Chicago University, and the decision was reached that the illness in question was due to carbon monoxide or coal gas poisoning. The canned foods were not considered responsible in any way.

x x x x x x x x